How to Start a Community Agriculture Project with Gateway Greening

Orientation for Community Gardens, Youth Gardens, and Community Orchards
Agenda

- What is a Community Agriculture Project?
- Introduction to Gateway Greening
- Benefits of being an “in-network” project
- The Development Process
  - Phase 1 - Outreach, Organizing, and Critical Mass
  - Phase 2 - Planning and Support
  - Phase 3 - Planning the Physical Environment
  - Phase 4 - Building it!
What is a Community Agriculture Project?

- A unique space where neighbors and residents can come together around common goals to build community and grow food

- It is an inclusive community space that reflects the personality of the community and members of the project

- A community agriculture project has the potential to be a neighborhood asset and create strong ties between neighbors and surrounding communities
Community Orchards
Introduction to Gateway Greening

Our mission is to educate and empower people to strengthen their communities through gardening and urban agriculture
Community Projects Program

Community Gardens, Youth & School Gardens, and Community Orchards
Community Projects Program

Map of project locations at Gatewaygreening.org/resources/mapofgardens
School Program
Volunteer Program
Giving Grove Program

- New program started Fall 2017
- Providing trees, shrubs, vines, and berries to community projects
- Groups must pay for the material costs of the plants
  - A limited number of scholarships are available that will reduce costs 50% or 90%
- Average costs are:
  - Trees - $50
  - Shrubs - $25
  - Vines - $15
  - Blackberries/Raspberries - $5
- Planting times are Feb-Apr and Oct-Nov
Gateway Greening Financial Transparency

- We serve projects on a first come, first serve basis
- Average money spent on a first year project is roughly $1,000
- For the Giving Grove program projects must contribute a portion to the costs of the trees and shrubs
- Starting in 2019 Community/School Garden projects will be expected to pay for a percentage of the material costs
Benefits of being an “in-network” project

- Access to volunteer groups
- Yearly Expansion applications
- Ordering seedlings at wholesale
- Tool-loan program
- Connected to thousands of other gardeners in the St. Louis region

Photo Credit: Dear Hart Photography
Community Project Eligibility

- Must be within St. Louis City or County
- Must not be within 0.25 miles of an existing community project
- Project representative must attend a Community Projects Orientation
- Youth projects must have parent and/or community leadership
- Preference will be given to historically underserved areas

www.GatewayGreening.org
Expectations of Community Project Group

- Actively participate in completing the four community project phases
- Complete 15 volunteer hours at an in-network GGI Community Agriculture Project
- Contribute to the fundraising plan and leverage existing resources among the broader community
Planning to work with Gateway Greening

- Each project will be assigned a staff member
  - Staff will follow up within two weeks after the orientation with a phone interview and to schedule the initial project group meeting
- GGI will work with new projects on a “rolling” timeline
- Community Project milestones
  - Groups must complete planning tasks and activities to move on to additional planning phases
- Each project is different and will progress at the groups pace
- Typical process takes 3-6 months but some groups take longer and some move faster

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Resources and Tools

- Start a Community Food Garden: The Essential Handbook by LaManda Joy
- How to Grow a School Garden: A complete guide for parents and teachers by Arden Bucklin-Sporer and Rachel Kathleen Pringle
- Gateway Greening website, resource packet, and staff

www.GatewayGreening.org
Key Planning Phases

- Phase 1: Laying the Foundation
- Phase 2: Making a Plan
- Phase 3: Taking Action
- Phase 4: Building it!
Phase 1: Outreach, Organizing, and Critical Mass

- Membership List
- Mission Statement and Project Goals
- Asset Map and Letters of Support
- Project Site Background
- Land Use Agreement
Membership List

- 10-15 adults with diverse backgrounds and experience, preferably living near the community project

- Group considerations:
  - Inclusive
  - Garden Experience
  - Time Commitment
  - Goals and Motivation
  - Resources
  - Commitment to Place

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Mission and Goals

- Clarify purpose of the garden and ensure that all members have a common understanding
- Useful for resolving and/or preventing conflict
- Not written in stone. Can be revised later if the group feels it necessary
Partnerships and Community Resources

- Think beyond just your core garden group members
- Embrace the “community” for the community project by asking who beyond the group is benefiting, and how can they support the project?
- Conduct the Asset-Mapping Exercise

Groups to consider reaching out to:

- Local Churches
- Boy Scout and Girl Scout Troops
- Food Pantries
- Nearby non-profits
- Local elected officials
Example Asset Map

Partner: Clifton Heights Neighborhood Assoc.
- How do they benefit your project?
  * Direct neighborhood connection, ability to recruit new volunteers, connect to new resources etc.
- How does your project benefit them?

Partner: PTO
- How do they benefit your project?
  * Parents are willing to help in the garden by watering and weeding. Also, support with fundraising activities
- How does your project benefit them?
  * Extra source of maintenance support and funds to keep the garden running

Partner: STL Earth Day
- How do they benefit your project?
  * Provide opportunity to apply for grant money
  * Connection to local resources
- How does your project benefit them?
  * Access to people who can direct us to specific resources
  * Good marketing for them

Mason School Garden

Partner: Boy Scouts Troop 331: Kevin Harrison
- How do they benefit your project?
  * Building bird houses for the garden
  * Support during work days
- How does your project benefit them?
  * Provides places for local birds to nest
  * Opportunity for community service projects which students can join

Partner: Sprouting Science
- How do they benefit your project?
  * Provide professional development focused on native plants, how to identify plants, ways to get students involved, how to build a sustainable garden.
- How does your project benefit them?
  * Introduction of native plants into the school garden to attract wildlife to the area.

Partner: School Staff & Admin
- How do they benefit your project?
  * Provide opportunities for students to work in the garden/spend time in the garden with a focus on academics, assist with maintain of the space.
  * Stress relieving place for students and staff
- How does your project benefit them?
  * Students do the planting and weeding during the school day, ensures space if facilitated for student growth and learning
Project Site considerations

- Ownership
- Past, Current, and Future Use
- Size
- Water
- Visibility (projects should be visible from main sight lines)
- Plant needs
Phase 2: Planning and Support

- Identify project leaders
- Develop project guidelines
- Specify how the community project will logistically be run

Youth Projects must also:

- Provide School/Youth institution demographics
- Project teaching plan and schedule, including 3 lessons
- Summer maintenance plan
Group Structure

- Each project needs **at least two** Project Leaders
  - Responsible for day-to-day maintenance
  - Communication with the group members
  - Main contacts for Gateway Greening

- Project Organization & Structure

- Project Rules
Organization Considerations for Schools

● Form a Garden/Project Committee
  ○ Present to the parent body
  ○ Hold garden meetings
  ○ Take notes, identify action items, and assign responsibility
  ○ Create leadership transition plans for when project leaders leave the institution
  ○ How will you organize and maintain the garden during the summer months?

● School garden coordinator
  ○ Compensate teacher for extra time
  ○ Pay community member part-time to maintain space
  ○ MO Healthy Foods AmeriCorp program - moriver.org/heritage-tourism/vista/
School/Youth Projects

- **Institution demographics**
  - Gateway Greening collects race and ethnicity information that is privately stored for research and fundraising efforts

- **Project teaching plan and schedule, including 3 lessons**
  - Gateway Greening has Seed to STEM K-8 lessons plans on our website under Education and Seed to STEM
  - For questions or comments on them email education@gatewaygreening.org

- **Summer maintenance plan**
  - This is the biggest failure for school gardens
  - Do not expect the school maintenance and janitorial staff to maintain it
Phase 3: Planning the Physical Environment

- Develop a multi-year project site plan
- Physical Needs and Resources
- Project budget
- Attend Gateway Greening Garden Leader Volunteer training and 15 hours in a Gateway Greening network project
- Orchard groups must attend an Orchard Steward maintenance class
- Youth projects must attend a minimum of 3 Gateway Greening educator workshops
Volunteer Training and Volunteer Hours

- **At least** one project leader has to attend a Gateway Greening Volunteer Leader Training
  - Email volunteer@gatewaygreening.org to schedule the training

- **At least** 15 volunteer hours must be completed per group by at least 3 members at a Gateway Greening network project.
  - Gateway Greening sites (GG main office, Demonstration Garden, and Carriage House) do not count. Must be a in-network project.
  - Gateway Greening will not coordinate this for you. We will give you the contact information of nearby project leaders

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Orchard Steward Training

- Two trainings a year, one in late winter and another late summer/early fall
  - Scheduled right before the two planting times
- It covers how the planting will go and how to take care of the plants for the first year
- Other Orchard specific classes throughout the year cover:
  - Pest and Disease Management
  - Summer Pruning
  - How to harvest

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Project Site Plan

● Before you break out your graph paper, revisit:
  ○ What is the purpose of the project?
    ■ Maximum production, education space, green neighborhood space?
  ○ Who is gardening and why?
  ○ What do you want to grow?
  ○ Are there going to be trees and shrubs?
  ○ How do you want to grow?
    ■ Communal beds or individual plots?
  ○ Where is the produce going?

● For orchard projects a staff person will help with the design and placement

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Special Considerations for Youth Projects

- What is needed to create effective outdoor classroom space?
  - Seating, bed sizes and heights, multiple group stations, etc.
  - Work with teachers, administrators, and students to think about design

- What are some possible sources of funding?
  - Fundraisers with the PTA
  - Grant funding

- What are the institutions aesthetic standards?
  - This is why there should be administrators involved from the beginning
Project Site Plan

Southampton Community Garden Map 2012

Gateway Greening
The Power of Growing Food

www.GatewayGreening.org
Project Site Plan: Florissant Community Garden

Composite Plan - Meandering

- Woodland Habitat
- Foraging Food Forest
- Pollinator Garden
- Riparian Habitat
- Prairie Habitat
- Orchard
- Event Space
- Community Garden
- Educational Spaces
Project Site Plan: Florissant Community
Project Budget

- Year 1 of your plan should include the basics for starting the project
  - Raised Beds and Soil
  - Trees and Shrubs
  - Hardscape Elements
  - Tools
  - Insurance costs (if applicable)

- Gateway Greening provides expansions to new projects after 1 year

- Start small and plan big!

www.GatewayGreening.org
Raised Beds

www.GatewayGreening.org
Berms
Three-tiered compost
Trellises
Other potential Hardscape elements

- Major hardscape (waterline, fence, tool sheds) is highly unlikely to be awarded in a project’s first couple years and typically requires at least a 50/50 match
- Work with your Alderperson, community volunteers - Scouts, churches

- Rain Barrels
- Informational signs
- Arbors
- Tool Sheds
- Task board
Note on potential Hardscape elements

- Tool sheds, task boards, arbors, and other special requests are rarely awarded and require:
  - Significant need
  - Community group to contribute most or all of the funding necessary to purchase materials for the project
Phase 4: Building it!

- Signing the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding)
- Garden Sign
- Organizing Install Day
  - Project members HAVE to be there at install
  - Gateway Greening will bring the materials and tools to install the project. The project is expected to provide the labor for the installation.
Now you are in the Network! What next?

- **Required** to complete annual survey
- Remember those Benefits?
  - Access to volunteer groups
  - Yearly Expansion applications
  - Ordering seedlings at wholesale
  - Connected to thousands of other gardeners in the St. Louis region
Next steps

- Start reaching out to community members and groups about your first community meeting
  - For youth/school projects must have at least one administrator, parent, and educator
- Gateway Greening staff member will follow up with you within two weeks to conduct an initial phone interview
- Schedule community meeting with staff member
  - Need at least 5 project members at first meeting
Next steps - Community Meeting

- The staff member will briefly go over the development process for everyone
- They will bring:
  - Phase 1 document
  - Project Guidebook
  - Project Resource Packet
  - Start a Community Food Garden book
  - *For youth/school projects* How to Grow a School Garden
- Aim to have the meeting near or at the site of the project so the staff person can look at the site
Questions?

@gatewaygreening or @gatewaygreeningstl (instagram)